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The American Journal of Nursing
NARRATIVES FROM THE WAR

IN CHARGE OF
ELISABETH ROBINSON SCOVIL

I

FROM MISS M. SOUTHCOTT

General Hospital, St. Johns, Newfoundland

A letter from Rheims, dated November 14, gives some idea of the conditions under which nurses are working there. The writer, Mlle. Luigi, is nursing superintendent of the hospital there and has done much for nursing in France. She was trained at the London Hospital and went from that to take charge of the hospital at Beziers, where she established the "système Florence Nightingale," and organised a training school on English lines. Later she went to the Hôpital Civile, Rheims, a large institution consisting of a hospital of one thousand beds, a home for the aged and infirm, and a convalescent home, making in all three thousand inmates. It is interesting to note that "garde-malade" has been replaced by "neurse" and apparently they have adopted the English term "probationer." The letter (translated) runs as follows:

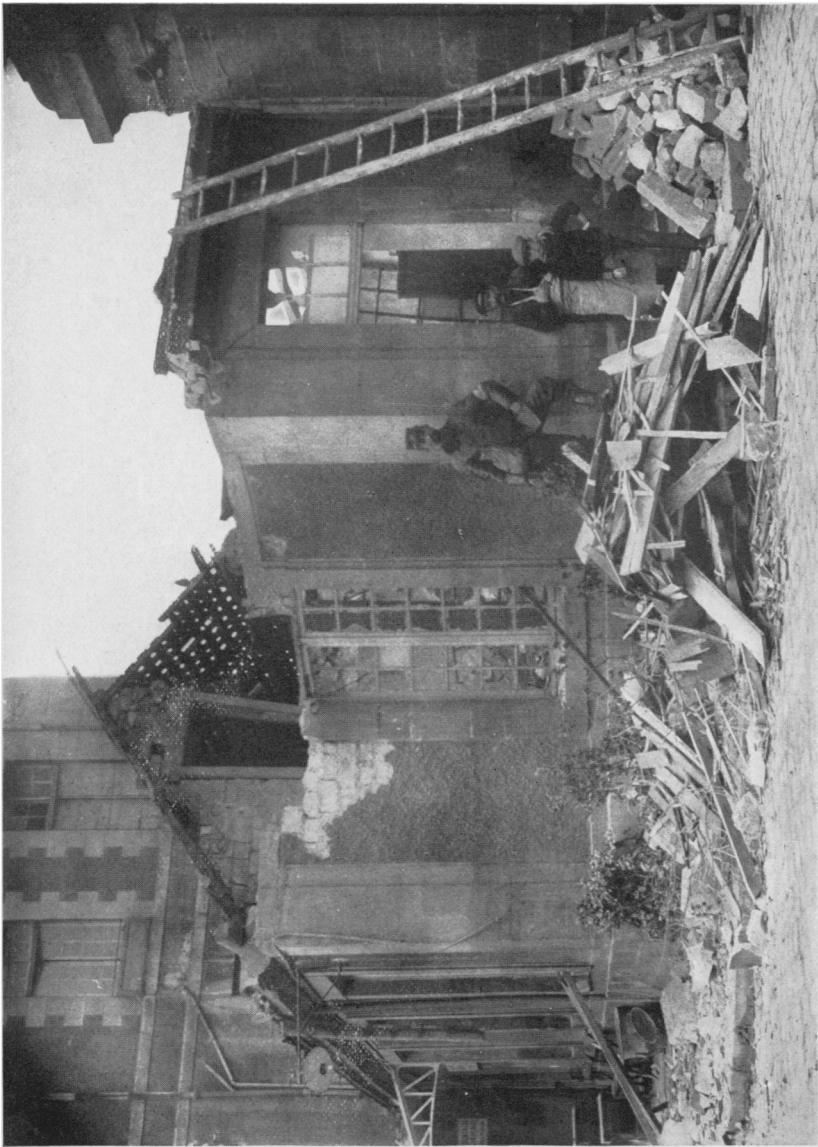
Your letter was very welcome and touched me deeply. It is a great consolation in the hour of sorrow to feel the sympathy of our friends for us and for our country. Rheims was occupied by the Germans the 4th of Sept. and to our great joy they left on the 12th. We had the hospital filled with the wounded, having sixty German officers among the number. The 4th of Sept., the day of their arrival at Rheims, they bombarded the town for three-quarters of an hour. It was really shameful, for Rheims, an open town like Brussels, was not fortified and had no army there. Thirty shells fell near the hospital, at about three yards' distance, one fell in the nurses' garden; fortunately there was no one there at the time. The patients were so frightened that we brought them down to the ground floor. When we had them all moved the bombardment had ceased!

After that there was a terrible arrival of wounded citizens from the town, one worse than the other. Many were dead when they arrived. No one expected a bombardment and those who had not fled from Rheims at the approach of the Germans went about their business as usual.

We were not very pleased at the idea of nursing German soldiers but they were so badly wounded by our artillery that we were sorry for them and did all we could for them, saying to ourselves that it would bring us good luck and that in return our soldiers would be well cared for by the Germans. From the 13th of Sept. the Germans who remained with the cannon on the heights kept up a continual bombardment. For two months we did not pass two days without receiving shells. The hospital itself received ten shells. It was and is heart-rending. We still have all the Germans wounded by the first shells, as well as those they had not time to take with them in their retreat and the German



WARD LUTON, SHOWING THE FRONT WHERE THE WALL HAS FALLEN, LEAVING IT
OPEN TO THE STREET



THE PORTER'S LODGE. A SHELL WENT THROUGH THE ROOF, BURYING SIX PEOPLE UNDER THE RUINS. WHEN THEY WERE REMOVED FROM UNDER THE RUBBISH NOT ONE OF THEM HAD A WOUND. THEY GOT RID OF THE PLASTER AND WENT BACK TO WORK. THE PHOTOGRAPHS SHOW THREE OF THOSE WHO ESCAPED.

officers, too, who said nothing but could hardly have approved of the bombardment of hospitals.

Six times we took the patients down into the cellars and under ground and we sent away as many as we could to other towns or outside the town, but from the 5th to the 20th October I fitted up three wards in the cellars, with beds, tables, in fact everything, real bombardment wards. It was very gloomy but the patients felt safe there.

Now, on account of the cold and in spite of the bombardment, we have fitted up the wards again and filled them with citizens seriously wounded by shells, and soldiers who will be transferred when they are better. I send you some photographs which will give you some idea of the destruction caused in some of the wards. Other wards which we have not photographed were fortunately empty when they were bombed.

You correspond with American Journals—do you think these photographs would be of sufficient interest to publish? Perhaps the Americans, seeing how much we are to be pitied at Rheims, might think of sending me some wool and warm clothing for our soldiers or money to procure some. I am getting up a clothing club so that the soldiers who come for a few days to the hospital to recuperate and then go back to the front again might go warmly clad. You know at Rheims we are directly on the field of battle and we have an enormous number of soldiers in the town.

Anything sent to me would come more surely if it were addressed to the American Consul at Rheims, to be forwarded to Mlle. Luigi, Directrice de l'hôpital Civil, Rue Simon, Rheims (Marne), France.

We had a visit from an American missionary early in October. She was a very welcome visitor at the hospital. She left our sick soldiers a lot of cigars, they had no tobacco, for the Germans had taken it all away.

Imagine, we are without gas, without electric light, the hospital is lighted with little oil night lamps that we put on the floor; that after 8 p.m. we may not go out; that after 9 all lights are forbidden; that it is very difficult to leave Rheims and that it is almost impossible to return, for civilians are not allowed to travel by train. What a life!

Happily the conduct has been good. Every one has been very brave. The Hospital Committee, who have remained at Rheims, have helped and encouraged us all along, the internes have worked like angels, and the nurses have done their work with great courage and coolness.

Besides we get used to it like soldiers. When the cannons thunder we diagnose, "These are our cannons," "No they are theirs" (theirs meaning the Germans'), "It is our 75," "No, 120." When they whizz too loud we make faces rather, but often, deafened by the noise, we pay no more attention to them.

Personally I have not changed my habits. I always sleep in my bed in my usual room on the first floor. In my office, on a mattress on the floor in the corner, the youngest probationer sleeps. Her family is at St. Quentin which was occupied by the Germans two months ago, and she has had no news of them. In the other corner of the room on a mattress on the floor, my maid sleeps. The nurses' and servants' rooms being high up have been bombarded and while the bombardment lasts everyone sleeps as near the ground as possible. The most nervous sleep in the cellars and the bravest keep their rooms above.

I give them perfect liberty in this respect. It is dangerous everywhere, and shells fall as often against the openings to the cellars as in the wards above. So in case of accident I want to have nothing to reproach myself with.

II

By DONNA G. BURGAR

Member of Unit F, Red Cross Nurses

Gleiwitz, the city from which I write, is in the southeast of Germany, near the Austrian and Russian borders, and has 70,000 inhabitants, two-thirds of whom are of Polish extraction. The chief industries are coal mining and manufacturing, which of course makes it a busy city, but also a dirty, smoky place. The surrounding country is heavily and beautifully wooded with large pine forests and a few heavy white birches to add to the picturesqueness, where the lakes and streams meet the forests. There are evergreens everywhere, in all shapes, from the tiny ones up to the largest size. Everywhere the woods are full of game, deer, partridge, quail, pheasant and hare. One of the resident doctors here says that he shoots about a thousand hare a year, so you can see how abundant the game is. The coal mines extend into Russia and are the best producing mines of Germany.

We have been allowed to enter into the activities of the work here for the town has taken care of more persons than any other town except perhaps Berlin, where final transfers are made. We have been wonderfully well cared for, as everything in Germany is perfectly managed and regulated. The other German unit, under Dr. Bradbury is assigned to Kosel, a three-quarter-hour ride north of this unit. We have fourteen nurses and three doctors in our unit and, at the present time, have the supervision of three hospitals, the large one, an improvised one in the city theatre, and two smaller ones of twenty-five and twenty beds each, which are both private hospitals in time of peace. The larger hospital has 100 beds and all three care for the most seriously wounded until ready for transfer on a hospital train to a base hospital.

We began active work on October 18 and have had capacity work ever since, which is just what we came for. We are thankful to be permitted to come so close to the field. Our supervisor, Miss Reutinger, of the New York Hospital and recently of the Lying-in, New York, speaks German most fluently, as do several of the other nurses. At present we are twenty-seven miles from the serious engagements and the cases are promptly transferred to us. There is absolutely no cholera and every precaution is taken in the German Army to keep dysentery, cholera and typhoid from the soldiers. Thus far they have succeeded. The men are unusually healthy and strong of physique. Today and last week we could hear the sound of cannon.

ITEMS

An American gentleman, for some years resident in Munich, is president of a society for the aid of destitute children and active in the Red Cross work. His wife has had three women in the house, each with a sewing machine, engaged in making garments for the sick and wounded. It is stated that although the American Hospital in Munich has only fifty beds, it has already cared for three thousand wounded.

Large numbers of Englishwomen have received instruction in First Aid and the elements of nursing, who have not been formally trained. These are employed as assistants in the special hospitals which have been established near camps where soldiers are being drilled and also where Belgium refugees are being cared for. They help the trained nurses in doing dressings and sometimes in cases of emergency, assist the other nurses at the operations. They live in their own homes and give a certain number of hours of service each day in the hospital nearest them.

The Commander-in-Chief of the British Army, Sir John French, has set the seal of his approval on trained nursing. An English newspaper quotes him as saying:

The standard of British hospitals here is so high and admittedly so far above those of all the rest that women chosen to serve with British comrades on this side of the channel should lack no qualification which they can, with diligent effort, acquire. There is never a moment to be lost in these crowded nights when the lives of a hundred poor victims hang by a thread and the watchful zeal of a patient, resourceful woman alone can avail.

It is almost exactly sixty years since the Crimean War began when British red tape did everything in its power to hinder Florence Nightingale's plans for the relief of the wounded.

A short time before Christmas the English took the trench that had been occupied for some time by the Germans. In it they found a little Christmas tree, decorated and hung with trifling gifts sent from home to the soldiers at the front. The English put the tree in a cart, embellished it with a large placard saying "Merry Christmas to Our Friend the Enemy," found a German prisoner to drive the cart and sent it across to the German trenches. The Germans received it with cheers and, not to be outdone in generosity, sent the cart back in charge of an English prisoner in their lines.